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certain circumstances there might be no fees, and that the interchange of specimens might be made free of postage. This idea arose from the fact that this department often franks packages of plants which are sent as contributions to the herbarium, and we were discussing the question whether this could be made available for packages where only a certain percentage of the specimens were to be so applied. But such a plan would be open to objection, and will not be entertained. Small packages are very cheaply transmissible through the mails, and botanists will be glad to avail themselves of such advantages. A set of rules for the Exchange is published in this number of the GAZETTE. GEO. VASEY.

Department of Agriculture, Washington.

What shall be done with our *Prosartes*?

The books give eight species as belonging to the American genus *Prosartes*, which would rest there undisturbed did not Bentham, in the *Genera Plantarum*, refer them all to Salisbury's Asiatic *Disporum*. The two genera are certainly exactly alike to all appearance, but had been supposed to differ in the position of the ovules, the Asiatic species having them pendulous from near the top of the cells, and the American ascending from near the base. But Bentham states that in one Himalayan species and in our *P. trachycarpa* he had found the ovules attached laterally near the middle—which surely leaves very slight basis for two genera. This is a pity, as it is an advantage to keep the groups apart on account of their difference of habitat, the generic name at once revealing the home of any species. Whether Mr. Bentham was right I am not enough of a botanist to decide, even if I had the specimens for an independent comparison of the species. Botanists in a small way like myself must be content under such circumstances to adopt the master's decision without question.

Taking it for granted, therefore, that *Prosartes* can no longer stand, the question arises, what authority is to be cited for the species when transferred to *Disporum*? Inasmuch as Mr. Bentham is known with certainty and by his own statement to have worked up the *Liliaceæ* for the *Genera Plantarum*, and there transfers the genus *Prosartes* to *Disporum* bodily, without exception or question, it would naturally seem right to cite him as the authority for the several species. Our species, then, should be written as they are given below in column A. But the *Genera Plantarum* was a joint work, and though the orders were portioned out so that some were revised by Mr. Bentham alone, and others by Dr. Hooker, yet the whole was so explicitly indorsed by both, and was so published under the names of both, that no part can be attributed exclusively to either. Consequently, instead of crediting the species to Bentham alone, they must be given to Bentham and Hooker, as in column B.

But now it is affirmed that this will not do; that Bentham and Hooker can not be cited as authority for a name which they never wrote; that in all Bentham's or Hooker's, or Bentham and Hooker's, writings, no mention can be found of a species *Disporum Menziesii*, nor of any of the others excepting *D. trachycarpum*, which alone is expressly mentioned in the *Genera Plantarum*. As for the rest, it is asserted that we do not know, and have no right to infer and say, that if Bentham and Hooker had written out the list they would have done it as below, for they might have united or dropped some of the species, or found some reason to alter the specific names, so that we are "making them say what they do not say," and virtually falsifying the record in citing them as authority. It is asserted that

this so-called "authority" is simply an abbreviated citation of the place where the name itself is first to be found. Since, therefore, this is the first time, so far as I know, that these names have actually appeared in print, this article and its writer will for good truth's sake need to be cited, and the names must accordingly stand as in column C. This, certainly, is very gratifying to one's vanity, to know that through all time these names will go down with my name attached, and that by this unimportant article I have attained to a certain small degree of cheap immortality in the records of science. But, after all, this effort at truth appears to me to be rather like straining at a gnat and doing the other thing. For however much it may be insisted on that this "authority" is only an abbreviated citation, I am sure that those who make the assertion must be conscious at heart that the doctrine is essentially a fiction, got up in recent times for a purpose. The name of the person which is attached to the name of a plant is always spoken of as the "authority" for the plant-name. We have no other designation for it, and for the reason that the word expresses exactly the idea. The name is intended to indicate the person upon whose authority the plant-name rests, the one who first made a *Disporum* of *Prosartes Menziesii*, for example. That is the very point that we wish to know; no one cares to know who it may be that after the change is authorized chances to be the first to make use of the name. Now, in this case, I am no authority for the transfer, and am not the author of *Disporum Menziesii*; I am simply blindly following Bentham's lead, and expressing in words what he had previously said in fact. It appears to me a worse falsification of the fact to cite "N. or M." as authority in this case than it is of the record to cite "Benth. & Hook." for it is denying that they made a *Disporum* of *Prosartes Menziesii*. As truly as the whole must include all its parts, and as the general also includes the particular, so truly did they make a *Disporum Menziesii* of *Prosartes Menziesii* when they said that *Prosartes* belonged in *Disporum*. It makes no difference that there might be already a *D. Menziesii*, and that there should not be two species of the same name in a genus, for there are actual cases of that very thing; nor does it make any difference what other questions there may be as to validity of species, correctness of nomenclature, or whatever else. All these questions can remain in abeyance as well under *Disporum* as under *Prosartes*, the one statement holding good that all the known and reputed species of *Prosartes*, such as they are, are now, in the judgment of Benth. & Hook., species of *Disporum*, subject to the same criticism in that genus as in the other.

Suppose, now, that, instead of adopting their conclusion. I were here combating it and refusing to accept it, but had occasion in the course of my article to name the species as if under *Disporum*. According to this rule I must still be cited as authority for the species just the same. Absurdity in this matter could not easily go much further, yet this does not seem to me very much more absurd than the other.

To take another example, Benth. & Hook. transferred Engelman's cruciferous genus *Dithyrea* to *Biscutella*, stating, simply, that there were two species, but not giving their names. Dr. Watson, in his "Index," accepting their identification, entered the two species *B. Californica* and *B. Wislizeni*, and cited honestly, as he doubtless thought, "Benth. & Hook., *Gen. P.*," as his authority. It has been said that this is wrong, as it makes Benth. & Hook. say what they do not say, and that the only absolutely correct thing now to do is to cite Watson as authority for the species (supposing that these names first appeared in the "Index," which happens not to be the case). But this, again, is just as much a falsification

of the record as the other, making now Watson say what he does not say, and representing him as claiming authorship of the species—the very thing he is careful not to do. A correct citation of the "Index" would be "*Biscutella Californica* Benth. & Hook, ex Watson, etc.," which shows exactly what Watson says. This, in the ordinary course of abbreviation, becomes "*B. Californica* Benth. & Hook.," just as we cite Nuttall as authority for numerous species which he never published, "Nutt." being a convenient abbreviation of "Nutt., ex Torr. & Gray," or "Nutt., ex DC. Prodr.," etc.

This instance illustrates, also, another point, viz.: the difficulty of determining with certainty in any case who was really the first to use the new name. It may have first appeared in an overlooked catalogue or journal, or other out of the way publication, and any authority supposed to-day to be correctly given is liable to be ousted to-morrow. Not a few cases have occurred where a writer in the supposed application of the rule has innocently written his own name as authority for a species, to find a little later that some happier mortal was in advance of him.

But to return to our new species of *Disporum*. They are now, according to rule, under the assumed authorship of "N. or M.," and the absurdity of perpetuating an anonymous authority of this or any sort is evident. What shall be done? If we can not go back to "Benth. & Hook." we must go forward, and the only alternative that occurs to me is to cite the "GAZETTE." Under the usual formula "Coul. Bot. Gazette," therefore, the names will now appear as in column D. That looks well. But why single out one from among the worthy editors of the GAZETTE to father these poor foundlings? It can not be denied that they have an equal claim upon all three, and that "Arthur, Barnes & Coulter" is the only legitimate resource. In the necessary process of condensation this becomes inevitably A. B. C., and thus the column E is filled, and, having reached this conclusion, we have found at last an answer to the question with which we started.

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Disporum Menziesii</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.
<i>Disporum lanuginosum</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.
<i>Disporum maculatum</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.
<i>Disporum trachycarpum</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	Benth. & H.	Benth. & H.	Benth. & H.
<i>Disporum Hookeri</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.
<i>Disporum trachyandrum</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.
<i>Disporum Oreganum</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.
<i>Disporum parvifolium</i> , Benth.....	Benth. & Hook.	N. or M.	Coul.	A. B. C.

N. OR M.

From Northern Idaho.¹

From Camp Lakeside, at the south end of Lake Pend d' Oreille, Mr. Leiberg writes:

"I send by this mail a package of seventy species of mosses. They have been nearly all collected during the past three weeks, within a radius of two miles of this place, which is our winter camp. I have not yet col-

¹We "open" some private letters from Mr. John B. Leiberg, who is prospecting in Northern Idaho, to give our readers some glimpses of his botanical observations. Although almost constantly in the saddle, Mr. Leiberg finds time to collect the plants of the region, and has sent in a number of new species.—EDS.